

EXTRACTS

FROM THE EXAMINATION OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD TEIGNMOUTH,**President of the British and Foreign Bible Society,**

BEFORE THE

House of Commons;

MARCH 30. 1813.

Relative to "The Practicability, Policy, and Obligation, of communicating the Knowledge of Christianity to the Natives of India."

MR. JACKSON.] How long was your Lordship in the service of the East India Company?—From 1768 to 1798, about thirty years altogether; I was not the whole time in India, but constantly in the service of the Company during that period; of that period I was twenty-four years resident in India.

During your Lordship's residence in India, in what parts did you reside?—Chiefly in Bengal.

How long did your Lordship fill the office of Governor General?—About four years and a half.

During any part of your Lordship's service, were you in the revenue department?—I was chiefly employed in that department before I succeeded to the situation of a member of the supreme council.

Did such employ afford to your Lordship an ample opportunity of studying the characters, manners and habits of the natives?—I certainly endeavoured to form an opinion of the character and habits of the natives.

Did your Lordship acquaint yourself with their languages?—I was acquainted with the common language of India, and the Persian.

(Examined by the Committee.)

Would it be consistent with the security of the British empire in India, that missionaries should preach publicly, with a view to the conversion of the native Indians, that Mahomet is an impostor, or should speak in opprobrious terms of the Brahuins or their religious rites?—I think the practice of preaching publicly the doctrines as stated in the question, would be attended with danger; but I do not think that it is at all necessary that such doctrines should be publicly preached for the purpose of converting the natives of India; there is nothing, as far as my experience goes, in the character of a missionary, that is offensive to the people of India; and if his conduct is regulated by prudence and under the influence of that piety which he professes to teach, I think that he will be highly esteemed by the natives. The question states, public preaching: there is a distinction between public preaching and conferences with individuals; what might be said in conversation to an individual upon these topics safely, might not be said safely when publicly preached to a multitude. I recollect in an account which was printed of the first Danish missionaries, I believe about the year 1717, there are conversations between the missionaries and natives, and this at a period I believe, when the authority of the natives was established in India; all those conversations go upon this principle, that the religion which the missionaries meant to preach was true, and that which they meant to oppose was false. I do not recollect that any ill consequences appear to have happened from such conferences between those Danish missionaries and the natives on the Malabar coast.

Would the dangers that might result from the exercise of an indiscreet zeal, to change the national religions, be greater or less in India than most other countries, from the peculiar habits and feelings of the people?—I have no hesitation in saying, that the dangers attending an indiscreet zeal would be considerable; at the same time, we have proofs, that a judicious and prudent zeal may be exercised effectually, and to the conversion of the natives.

Would it be desirable, in your Lordship's opinion, that persons professing to teach Christianity in India, should act under the licence and control of some ecclesiastical authority residing in that country?—I should think it would be more advisable to leave the control at the discretion of the government of the country, who would be much better judges how to exercise that discretion prudently.

Is your Lordship aware that an opinion prevails in India, that it is the intention of the British government to take means to convert the natives of the country to the Christian religion?—I never heard it, nor suspected it.

Has not your Lordship heard, that one of the chief causes of the mutiny at Vellore, in which a British regiment was massacred, was an opinion of that kind?—I certainly did see it asserted in print in this country, but I took some pains to clear up that point, and cleared it up completely to my own satisfaction, that the assertion was totally without foundation; I would beg leave to mention, that my opinion upon the subject is in print, in a pamphlet that does not bear my name, but was very well known to be written by myself, entitled, "Considerations on the practicability, policy and obligation, of communicating the knowledge of Christianity to the natives of India." I refer to that pamphlet, as containing an answer to the question put to me.

Allowing the opinion, stated before, to have existed in India, of the intention of this government to force the Christian religion on the natives of India, would not the sending out a Bishop to India, tend to strengthen that opinion?—I should think it would be viewed with perfect indifference by the natives.

Your Lordship having stated, that you have known proofs of persons being converted from the Hindoo to the Christian religion; will you have the goodness to state where have those instances occurred?—The proofs to which I referred, were the conversions by Swartz on the Coromandel coast.

Does your Lordship know any instance of a respectable Hindoo being converted to the Christian religion?—When I was in Bengal, I do not recollect that there were any missionaries from this country in that part of India, excepting for a short time before I left India, and I had had no knowledge of them, so that I cannot speak of any conversions of my own personal knowledge in India.

Should any provision be made in an act of parliament, empowering missionaries or others from this country to go to India for the purpose of converting the Hindoos to Christianity, do not you think it would be a document placed in the hands of our enemies, of the agents of France, or any other agent, of which they would make an ample handle to set that country in a flame?—I do not think that the agents of France or any other public enemies would be able to make that use of it.

Your Lordship does not then think, knowing India as you do most perfectly, that were the Hindoos possessed with an idea that we had an intention of changing their religion and converting them into Christians, that it would be attended with any bad consequences at all?—I will expatiate a little in my answer to that question: Both the Hindoos and Mahometans, subject to the British government in India, have had the experience of some years, that in all the public acts of that government every attention has been paid to their prejudices civil and religious, and that the freest toleration is allowed to them; that there are many of the regulations of government which prove the disposition of government to leave them perfectly free and unmolested in their religious ordinances, that any attempt at an infringement upon their religion or superstitions would be punished by the government of India; with that conviction, which arises from experience, I do not apprehend that they would be brought to believe that this government ever meant to impose upon them the religion of this country.

[His Lordship was directed to withdraw.

His Lordship was again called in.]

Is it relying upon the good opinion that the natives have of our conduct hitherto towards them, your Lordship has answered; or will you give a direct answer to the question, without; that should the state of things be altered, and we not observe that conduct we have hitherto observed, but introduce new modes and enact new laws for the carrying into effect the converting the natives to Christianity, that that would not be attended with disagreeable consequences to us?—If a law were to be enacted for converting the natives of India to Christianity, in such a manner as to have the appearance of a compulsory law upon their

consciences, I have no hesitation in saying that in that case it would be attended with very great danger.

Is it not rather your Lordship's opinion, that the good effects to be derived from inculcating the precepts of the Christian religion amongst the natives of India, had better be attempted by what is termed conferences, than by an enactment in an Act of Parliament?—If that enactment goes only to allow persons to reside in India, for the purpose of instructing the natives in the doctrines of Christianity, I mean as far as they are willing to receive them, I should see no danger in it; in truth I believe that all attempts at conversion are by conferences between missionaries and individuals, and that public preaching is seldom resorted to, till there is a congregation of converted Christians.

Does your Lordship know of any converted societies or congregations? I understand the question to have a reference to my personal knowledge. I have no personal knowledge, but I have heard and read of conversions since I left Bengal, which I received as credible and authentic.

Does your Lordship know of any missionaries, who have conducted themselves indiscreetly?—I recollect some years ago, hearing one or two instances alleged of misconduct in the missionaries; I do not recollect now of what nature they were; probably instances of injudicious zeal.

In reference to your Lordship's personal acquaintance with the Gentoo natives of Hindostan, what is the general standard of their moral character, in comparison with the inhabitants of Christian countries in general?—My estimate of their moral character is very low, and certainly I should say greatly below the standard of Christians in this country.

Can your Lordship specify any particular vices for which they are remarkable?—Falsehood is a very prominent part of their character; I have very often drawn their character which has appeared in the public records of the government; but I feel some difficulty to do it *viva voce* at present; my opinion of the moral character of the Hindoos is very low indeed, I think it is a compound of servility, fraud and duplicity.

Does your Lordship think, that their religious faith has any direct influence upon that character?—That character may have originated, in a considerable degree, in the despotism of the ancient government, which would naturally produce servility and deception, as the only guard against extortion; I do not think that their religion is calculated to correct it.

Are there any particular crimes that are directly inculcated by their religion?—Certainly; what would be called crimes in this country; for instance, such as the burning of widows on the funeral pile of their husbands.

Is that a very common practice in India?—From my own experience, I should not think it very common, but from the information which I have obtained from other sources, and which I believe to be authentic, it is very common.

Is not the practice of infanticide very common in Hindostan?—Not, I believe, by any means general; it has been practised by some particular districts; It was practised in a particular district of the province of Benares, till it was prohibited, I believe, by an express law of the Bengal government; I think it was by a regulation of the Bengal government.

Did that interference of the government, in preventing infanticide, create any popular tumult or discontent in that country?—I said a regulation of government, but I am not certain that it was; in the first instance, I believe an application was made to the pundits or priests of the Hindoo religion, and they declared it to be contrary to their religion; and they gave an opinion, which was used by government, as a means of putting an end to it; I speak with some difficulty as to an accurate recollection of the circumstances.

Is it not a practice, enjoined or encouraged by the religion of the Hindoos, to immolate themselves as a sacrifice to some of their deities or idols?—I believe it was practised at the festival of Jaggernaut, when they throw themselves under the wheels of the car in which the idol is carried, and suffer themselves to be immolated.

They prostrate themselves under the wheels of a heavy car, and are crushed to death?—Such, I understand, to have been the practice.

And that is a religious rite enjoined or encouraged by their religion?—How far it is sanctioned by their books, I cannot say; but it was considered as a religious rite and meritorious sacrifice, by the Hindoos themselves; there are many practices which, I believe, are not sanctioned by their books of religion.

Do their brahmins or priests sanction it, by their precepts or their presence?—I should suppose (though I never was present at an exhibition of the kind, and I only speak from what I have heard) their brahmins or their priests did certainly sanction and approve it.

Are there not other modes of suicide or murder, as by throwing themselves into the Ganges, that are in common practice among them?—I believe there are; but I do not speak from my own knowledge on the subject, but what I have collected from others.

Are not some of their religious festivals celebrated by rites of unnatural obscenity?—I never was witness to any such myself. I have known very indecent pictures in their temples, but I never was present at any indecent rites, nor can I speak to them with any certainty.

The question relates for your Lordship's information and belief upon the subject, during your residence in India?—I have heard so; but I cannot speak to my own knowledge, in that part of India where I have been.

Is not the Brahminical law, a rule of very great oppression upon the other casts in India?—The laws of the Hindoos are certainly peculiarly favourable to the Brahmins who are their priests; they have exemptions and immunities, which the other casts have not; but I do not know that the Brahminical law operates as oppressive upon the other Hindoos, further than in the mode I have mentioned, if that can be called oppression.

Is the murder of an individual of another cast by a Brahmin, or the murder of a Brahmin by an individual of another cast punished in the same way, or what are the distinctions between them?—They are certainly not punished in the same way; for, I believe, by the Hindoo law, a Brahmin cannot be put to death; he may suffer punishment that shall be worse than death, but he cannot be put to death. If a person kills a Brahmin, he is guilty of a crime which is inexpiable; and is, moreover, liable to all the temporal punishments of the law.

Does your Lordship speak there of malicious killing or murder, or killing a Brahmin under any circumstances?—I certainly meant to consider it as murder; as killing with an intent to kill: how far the accidental killing of a Brahmin might be expiable, I really do not know.

Is there not such a prejudice upon that subject, that a Brahmin will sometimes threaten to put himself to death, in consequence of a quarrel with an individual of an inferior cast, so as to bring upon that individual the guilt of an inexpiable crime?—Instances certainly have occurred of that, in which Brahmins have used that threat as a means of extortion, or to gain a particular point; that is, they have threatened to kill themselves, unless the point which they meant to gain, should be conceded to them.

In your Lordship's judgment, is not the distinction of casts, enforced by the religion of the Hindoos, an insuperable obstacle to their advancement in the civilization, and in moral character?—I do not know whether it is an insuperable impediment; but it certainly is a very great impediment to the improvement of the moral character.

What is the condition of the female sex among the Gentoos, as affected by their religion and prejudices?—They are so concealed, that we really know little or nothing of them; nor is it usual to talk with the Gentoos about their female sex; I believe that their state in general is merely that of slaves to their husbands.

In your Lordship's judgment, would the introduction of Christianity among the Gentoos tend materially to the improvement of their civil condition?—I think it would tend to the improvement of their civil condition.

During your Lordship's acquaintance with India, were any efforts made by the East India Company for the propagation of Christianity in Hindostan?—None that I recollect.

Were the missionaries, of whom your Lordship spoke, sent out and maintained by the Company, or by the charity of individuals?—When I was in India I did not know them; for the greatest part of the last year that I was in India, I was absent from Calcutta; they certainly were not sent out by the Company, but must have been sent out by individuals.

In your Lordship's judgment, would the discreet and well-regulated efforts of missionaries, as they have generally conducted themselves hitherto in India, be dangerous to the peace or security of the British dominions in that country?—I think not.

Does it fall within your Lordship's knowledge or information, that other Christian countries, possessing dominions in India, have been more or less active than Great Britain, in the attempt to propagate Christianity in that country?—From what I have read, I should suppose much more so.

Did not the Danish government, while it possessed settlements in India, use some efforts for that purpose?—I believe it did; but those efforts were materially assisted by the Society for promoting Christian knowledge in this country.

Did your Lordship ever hear of any inconveniences or evils that followed the efforts of the Danish government to teach Christianity in India?—I never did.

Are there not at present in India, considerable numbers of Christians, natives of the country?—I believe a great many in the southern parts of the peninsula, particularly the Syrian Christians.

Are there not considerable bodies of Christians in the island of Ceylon, who have been converted under the dominion of the Dutch?—I believe there are.

Has your Lordship ever heard of any political evils that attended the efforts of the Dutch in that line?—I have not; but, at the same time, I am totally unacquainted with the Dutch proceedings.

Are there not considerable bodies of Christians, who were converted to Christianity under the dominion of the Portuguese, while they had territories in India?—They certainly made great numbers of converts, and, I believe, there are many of their descendants now remaining to this day.

Was any opposition made by the native powers; or did any convulsions follow in those parts of India, in consequence of the introduction of Christianity by the Portuguese?—I know very little of the history of the introduction of Christianity by the Portuguese. When I say I did not hear of any convulsions, allowance must be made for my ignorance of the history.

Having given it as your Lordship's opinion, that the gradual introduction of Christianity among the Hindoos would tend to improve their civil and moral condition, is your Lordship of opinion, that the improvement of their civil and moral condition, would tend to increase their consumption of the various manufactures of their own or of any other country?—I do not know that it would in any considerable degree.

Would it have a tendency to that effect?—I do not think it would have a tendency.

Can your Lordship give the Committee any information, respecting the general character of the Danish mission in India?—There were two of the missionaries, Swartz and Gericke, who were men that possessed the esteem of the natives in the greatest degree; and with respect to the general character of the Danish mission, the impression upon my mind is highly favourable to it.

Does your Lordship know, whether either of those missionaries was able, at any time, from the influence which he possessed with the natives, to render any material services to the British government?—Swartz I believe was, in a very considerable degree.

What is the comparative moral character of the Hindoo natives of India, and the converted natives?—I have had no opportunities of making the comparison.

Does your Lordship confine the description you have given of the character of the Hindoos, to the Hindoos of Calcutta, or generally?—To the Hindoos as generally known to me on that side of India, not merely Calcutta.

Is the Committee to understand, that the Hindoo women are kept in confinement, shut up?—I believe perfectly so; in a perfect state of seclusion.

Does your Lordship conceive that the translation of the Scriptures into the native languages of India, would be attended with any dangerous consequences?—None at all in my opinion.

Your Lordship was understood to say, that the government in the East Indies had never lent itself directly to the encouragement of Christianity among the Hindoos; from your own knowledge, or any information you have had the means of acquiring there, was the government in India ever known to give any discouragement, or to shew any aversion to any fair, reasonable and discreet attempts, on the part of judicious persons, to introduce Christianity?—I do not recollect that I said the government had never lent themselves to the encouragement of the introduction of Christianity in India; because when I was in India there were no missionaries, nor any attempts made in India, that I know any thing of. The missionaries who arrived at that time employed themselves principally in learning the languages; which it was necessary for them to know, before they could talk to the natives, or attempt to convert them.

Have the government ever shown any discouragement to a fair and judicious attempt on the part of discreet persons to introduce Christianity?—When I was in India, the question never occurred, for them

to show either encouragement or discouragement; I have never heard, since I left India, that they have shown any discouragement.

From your acquaintance with the native character, if they were to entertain the apprehension, that the government of India were secretly favourable to the propagation of Christianity among them, what effect, in your Lordship's mind, would it produce upon them?—I do not think it would produce any material effect upon the natives of India, as long as they were convinced that no forcible attempts would be made to convert them.

Would not the appearance of bishops, or of an ecclesiastical hierarchy among them, tend to encourage that apprehension among the natives, that force would ultimately be used to establish Christianity amongst them?—It does not occur to me, that any such idea could possibly arise from the appearance of a bishop in that country.

Have there not been, for a considerable number of years, bishops of the Roman Catholic persuasion in different parts of India?—Not in the part of India in which I have resided; on the Malabar coast there have.

Does your Lordship know of any discontents having been occasioned by a jealousy of those bishops or ecclesiastics?—I certainly do not; but, at the same time, I have to say that I have heard very little about them at all.

Was the missionary Swartz in India at the time when your Lordship was there?—He was; but not in the same part of India.

Does your Lordship know whether Mr. Swartz went into various parts of India, professing to teach the people about Christianity among whom he went?—In the part of India in which he resided, which was the southern part of the peninsula, he certainly did profess, as I have understood, to teach the people Christianity; and I believe since his death, the Rajah of Tanjore has granted a spot of ground for building a church within his dominions, for the use of native Christians, out of respect to the memory of Swartz.

Does your Lordship know that any dissatisfaction was expressed by any number of people in India amongst whom Mr. Swartz lived, or to whom he attempted to teach Christianity?—I never heard of any dissatisfaction of any kind, expressed at the conduct of Mr. Swartz.

Does not your Lordship know that the missionary Swartz was highly esteemed by the Rajah of Tanjore?—I have always heard so, and believe it.

Does not your Lordship know that he was in the greatest credit with the natives of Tanjore?—I have always understood so.

Not merely credit as a respectable character; but does your Lordship know whether, at a period when the English had lost their credit with the natives of that country, the natives did not enter into contracts with the missionary Swartz; and whether they did not take his word for the fulfilment of those contracts, when they would not take the word of any other person?—The circumstance, as it has been represented to me, has this difference, that they took the word of Swartz when they would not take the engagement of their own Rajah. Before I withdraw, I beg leave to state, that many questions have been proposed to me, upon which, if they had been given me beforehand, I should have taken two or three days to consider of them, before I returned my answers. I have given the best answers which occurred to me at the instant; and I trust the nature of the questions will be my apology for any mistakes I may have made in my answers.

MARCH 31.

His Lordship was called in at his own request, when his Lordship said: I would beg leave, with the permission of the House, to explain an inaccuracy in my testimony yesterday. I will first read the question that was proposed to me, and the answer which I gave; and then the answer which I would propose to substitute for it. The question proposed to me was, "Has not your Lordship heard that one of the chief causes of the Mutiny at Vellore, in which a British regiment was massacred, was an opinion of that kind, that is, of an intention to force the Christian religion upon the Natives?" The answer which I gave was, "I certainly did see it asserted in print in this country; but I took some pains to clear up that point, and cleared it up completely to my own satisfaction, that the assertion was totally without foundation. I would beg leave to mention, that my opinion upon the subject is in print, in a pamphlet which does not bear my name, but was very well known to be written by myself, entitled, "Considerations on the practicability, policy, and obligation of communicating the knowledge of Christianity to the natives of India." I refer to that pamphlet, as containing an answer to the question put to me." The explanation I would wish to give upon the point is this: That I did hear that an intention, imputed to the English Government, of forcing Christianity upon the native troops, was the cause of the Mutiny at Vellore; that it had been so explained by some designing persons to the troops; and that, at the same time coupled with a public order, from which it derived weight and plausibility, it had had an effect in producing that Mutiny. I can explain to the Committee, if they will allow me,

the cause of the mistake. My recollection was carried back to that pamphlet to which I referred, in which I had endeavoured to refute an opinion, that the great increase of missionaries on the coast of Coromandel, with the publication of the scriptures and other tracts, have been a current cause in producing the Mutiny at Vellore; but my recollection not being clear on the subject, I transferred the refutation to the other part of the argument, instead of confining it to that which I have now stated.

Does your Lordship think it would be advisable to allow persons to take upon them the character of preachers and teachers of Christianity in India, without some previous examination as to their fitness for the undertaking, in respect to religious knowledge and discretion?—I think they should not be allowed, without testimonies to their fitness for the business.

Will your Lordship have the goodness to state from what quarter those testimonies should be granted, as to that fitness in religious knowledge and discretion?—That is a question I am not prepared to answer.

Does your Lordship think that any qualification could justify sending preachers to preach the Christian religion in that country; that it could be done with safety to the government of the country?—Certainly I do; I think upon that subject I may appeal to experience; there have been missionaries now in Bengal, from this country, seventeen years; they have circulated among the natives various copies of the scriptures in the dialects of India, with many other pamphlets; and I have not heard that any thing that they have done has been the cause of alarm among the natives of India.

- 19 North. (A 6 for Mr Davis of Middlebury) 50
- 20 Well? (3 in Mine) Mr Wallis & Mr B. Ward Huntington 6
- 21 Oney for Bedford, Danvers, Linton &c
 the remainder 100
 or rather the remainder?
- 22 Hitts — A 2 for Thrapstone 25
- 12 Mr Toller 12

100
 100
 100

10. Newcastle Rev. Dr. Penzance — for Sunderland, N. Shields
 them to be by Abnerwick & Berwick — 100
11. Hull Messrs. Carhill & Greenwood — 80
12. Leeds Messrs. ^{Henry T. Langford} Thackeray & Hawson — 60
- ~~13~~ Bradford (in the same parcel) Rev. Mr
 Steadman Lane of for Haworth,
 Thibden Dr. Bampf, &c — 60
13. Manchester, Messrs. Pope & Wright — 50
- ~~14~~ In the same parcel Liverpool — 100
 Mr. W. Hooper
 with a request to them to send
 of them
- 12 for the Wigan Association & to
 divide the rest between them & Walsley
14. North. Mr. James Lomas — 50
 for Collingham Newark, — ^{Lincoln} Indorse
- 12 for Rev. Mr. Pike Derby, request
 ing him in a Note to send one
 to Rev. Mr. Smith, & to Mr. Cuffe
 ditch for Mr. J. Ward
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 15. Chipping Norton Rev. Mr. Gray — 50
 Oxford — putting in for ^{Bromton, Cirencester Horsley,} ~~London~~ 100
 & Hasley, and Abingdon
- In 2: or Chipp. Harf., Rev. Mr. Gray 50
- N. Lei? for Amby & Mr. Yates North Bridge
 Dr. Sheepshead
 12 for of them for Amby, a few for Sutton &
 Blaby, to be sent in the Harb. parcel 00
17. Harb. Oak: Mr. Miller — 6
18. Harb. Mr. J. Hemmings, for
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 Clipstone 6; R. S. send the Lei? parcel in 18
 the Harb. with a request for it to be forwarded.